

# ELECTRONIC RESOURCES REVIEW

**PubMed Health:** National Center for Biotechnology Information, US National Library of Medicine, 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda MD, 20894; <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/>. Free website

Since its mysterious appearance in Google search results, PubMed Health has been a notable topic among medical librarians and the blogging community. In August 2010, the *MidContinental Region News* [1] announced the new PubMed Health resource from the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), which was quickly followed by a post from *The Krafty Librarian* [2]; however, no official announcement was made about this new resource. Then, PubMed Health appeared as the number one Google search result for medications starting in August 2010 and made a bigger appearance in February 2011 [3], creating several questions among the blogging community. With still no official announcement, the blogging community was left to fill in the gaps [4]. The sudden arrival of this new resource created a flurry of questions, followed by uncertainty until finally NCBI tweeted [5] about the new PubMed Health on March 2, 2011, with a link to the newly released home page.

## Purpose

As Rumsey and this reviewer said, "PubMed Health has a face," but does it have a place [6, 7]? After seven months, PubMed Health finally released a home page and an about page laying to rest many unanswered questions [8]. The website is designed to be a consumer health website produced by NCBI, a division of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) [8]. According to the about page, "PubMed Health provides up-to-date information on diseases, conditions, injuries, drugs, supplements, treatment options, and healthy living, with a special focus on comparative effectiveness research from institutions around the world" [8].

## Content

Questions regarding content have been answered with the release of

the new about page. PubMed Health includes consumer guides summarizing comparative effectiveness research, fact sheets on diseases and conditions, information on drugs and supplements, encyclopedic overviews of health topics, and links to external websites [8]. The content on PubMed Health is supplied and updated by the following resources: "Comparative Effectiveness Review Summary Guides for Consumers" from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); "InformedHealthOnline: Fact Sheets and Research Summaries" from the German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG); PubMed Clinical Q&A, NCBI summaries of comparative effectiveness drug reports; A.D.A.M. Medical Encyclopedia; and American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists consumer medication information [8]. Comparing the content and content sources to MedlinePlus reveals several similarities—even identical information—between the two resources.

## Features

The distinguishing feature of PubMed Health is the inclusion of comparative effectiveness research. According to AHRQ, "comparative effectiveness research is designed to inform health-care decisions by providing evidence on the effectiveness, benefits, and harms of different treatment options" [9]. Comparative effectiveness research is, in fact, to date, the only difference in content between PubMed Health and MedlinePlus. PubMed Health does provide additional links to "conditions of interest." The links on the right-hand side to "evaluating your options" are the comparative effectiveness research component and are reminiscent of certain clinical reference tools. The evidence-based comparative effectiveness research in PubMed Health could assist hospitals with creating evidence-based information to fill part of the requirement of creating clinical decision support rules as part of meaningful use, under the Health Information Technology for Econom-

ic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act [10].

Until the alluded-to *NLM Technical Bulletin* [1] on PubMed Health is released, the about page is the only information available on the plans for PubMed Health. Although information on this resource is limited, librarians should be aware that the comparative effectiveness research can serve as a clinical reference tool and assist with evidence-based medicine research.

## Accessibility

Despite similarities in content and the enigmatic strategic plan for PubMed Health, the major feature of PubMed Health worth noting is its appearance at the top of most Google search results for many medications and diseases. MedlinePlus typically appears on the first page of Google searches for health information, but not first. Searching for "paroxetine" in Google results in PubMed Health being listed first and MedlinePlus seventh, after Wikipedia. It is imperative to note Google search results are based on search history, which creates unique results for each computer. Librarians should be aware of this new resource, because it could be the first result when searching for health information.

While PubMed Health appears at the top of most Google search results on medications and diseases, MedlinePlus has the ability to integrate with electronic medical record (EMR) systems. Currently, PubMed Health does not integrate with any EMR system. In addition to a lack of communication on this new resource, there is also confusion about distinguishing PubMed Health from MedlinePlus, MEDLINE, and PubMed. It will be interesting to see how these resources will interact in the future.

## Conclusion

For now, medical librarians should be aware of this new resource and be prepared to answer questions about the content and purpose of PubMed Health. Whether the resource will integrate into EMR systems, serve as a clinical reference tool, or fulfill

requirements of the HITECH Act has yet to be seen.

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